

**DANGER OF COMFORT ZONE**

Success generally leads to complacency but a few corrective steps can solve the problem, says M R CHANDRAMOWLY

LEADERS establish organisations, turnaround companies, set vision and strategy, get and drive right people in place to achieve business results. Once the goal achievement cycle completes a turn, people heave a sigh of relief and it is a natural phase. That is where leaders are prone to enter comfort zones. When success tree blooms and begins bearing fruits, leaders put their feet up and fail to notice the end of the harvest. Just because they have and stint of success and have been achieving that for quite some time, it doesn't necessarily mean they are the best in the world. If they are not best in the world, it is the indication of decline. Few leaders cross comfort zones turning threats of change and grab the opportunity to excel. How is this done? Can change be managed at a given point of time? How a successful leader takes change as a constant variable and uses the competency pointers of "Managing change"?

What is change?

Change is another name of nature. Change doesn't happen at a given point of time. There is nothing eternal which is "changeless". The world of nature and life change continuously. The silent transformation of invisible tiny seed in to a forest, forest burning into ashes, ashes getting in to mother-earth again support the growth and all this is a perpetual natural change cycle. Change flows in and out of nature's recycling process without our will or consent. The same principle also works here in the world of business, and the bend of the bell curve says it all.

Change management

Managing change doesn't mean that we look at something, which is changing outside while we comfortably stay within. Each one of us desires to succeed. The changes that happen around us, generates a stimulus, necessitating us to take an appropriate step and to move forward, driven by a survival instinct. Successful leaders always look at there developmental areas readjust those with the changes happening around and move towards perfection.

The degree of our success depends on what we chose, how our choice is validated in the world and what we do differently from our standpoint, moving towards perfection to achieve success.

Our ancient wisdom identifies three approaches to change management.

1. At level one, a leader anticipates change and dynamically moves with clear thinking, discriminating the choices and by making right judgments. Thus from his stand point he moves towards success and comes very near to it, in the state of motion of self effort and the change.
2. In the second level, the focus is more on reaching immediate objectives, fulfilling desires and combating with what comes up in our way, day in and day out. This survival approach will just keep us where we are. At this level, we will be moving with the same speed of the "carrot" which moves with the horse, making it visible but not reachable. Here, our distance from the perfection remains constant.
3. The third level is the focal point of change management, which is the cause for most of the leadership failures. In this level one revels in misconception of "I am happy - every thing is fine" approach deluded by comforts and enjoyment of success and slips slowly in to comfort zone....

We have seen great accomplishers building businesses and organisations prematurely falling out. They fail to look at the expectations and perceptions of the people around them.

The position, power and their business results make them believe that inconsistency and "flavour of the day" style is the way to manage change and seldom realise that they are moving in this third level away from success.

Transformation

Is change painful? Yes. When a caterpillar transforms to a butterfly, it doesn't happen without pain and fear. The body of ugly caterpillar splits open to allow the colourful wings of the butterfly to emerge. *Sumantra Ghoshal* in his book 'Managing Radical change' calls this transformational change as a journey through the valley of death. "In different phases of this journey, one will experience different kinds of emotions from complacency, denial and resistance through anger and depression to exploration, enthusiasm and commitment."

Change is something to do with realigning strategy and culture by retaining some other aspects. But, transformation is a systematic and simultaneous attack across many fronts that influencing overall effect. Simultaneous attack is the key component of change management competency which is well illustrated by the "Hedgehog concept".

The Hedgehog Concept

The success of leading change management can be illustrated by what is known as Hedgehog concept. Isaiah Berlin in his story "Hedgehog and the Fox" divides the world into hedgehogs and foxes based on a Greek parable. Fox is a cunning creature and knows many things, but Hedgehog knows one big thing. When a fox

leaps out on it, Hedgehog sensing the danger, rolls up into a perfect spear of sharp spikes pointing outward in all directions. The fox sees the hedgehog's defence and calls off the attack. Fox begins with a new line of attack but the Hedgehog always wins. This simplifies complexity of change management into a single organising idea or principle that unifies and guides every thing.

Great leaders are like hedgehogs and they do things, which affect their overall objectives. Hedgehog concept is the central theme of the book "Good to Great" by Jim Collins, the co-author of best seller, "Built to Last".

He explains Hedgehog concept as the intersection of three circles;

What you are deeply passionate about?

What you can be the best in the world at? and

What drives your economic engine?

Leadership success stories and research on competencies of star performers provide us ways to manage change. Here is what successful leaders do differently to manage change.

Competency : Leading and Managing Change

The behavioural indicators of this competency could be:

Recognise the need for change and remove barriers by challenging the status quo. Stays abreast of trends that affect the organisation's future competitiveness.

Manages own response to change by remaining proactive and developing new skills for future contexts.

Communicates frequently during transitions to clarify direction and provide mutual support.

Shifts priorities and/or roles responsively to meet customer or business needs. Generates creative, non-traditional options for ways to improve work processes by recognising those who initiate creative approaches and removing barriers to risk-taking.

Changes methods and technologies to improve results and provide business advantages. Values and encourages diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and communication styles.

Communicates vision and direction that include clear benefits of change for individuals.

Develops and changes strategies in collaboration with stakeholders using participative methods. Supports others through the psychological phases of change.

Takes responsibility for change leadership, even when issues are unpopular.

Accelerates information access and efficiency of operations through use of appropriate technology.

Encourages flexible roles and cross-training to increase capability and responsiveness.

Leads by example and inspires and guides groups and people articulating to arouse enthusiasm for a shared vision and mission.

Steps forward to lead as needed, regardless of position and champion the change to enlist others in its pursuit. Guides the performance of others while holding them accountable.

Effective leaders learn to change over from the habit of lying in comfort zones. Habits can be difficult to change but can be achieved through persistence. The role of a leader is to encourage individuals to adopt new working practices in line with the way the changing business strategy. New habits can be encouraged to be cultivated by providing feedback, imparting coaching and inculcating role modelling. Competencies such as Teamwork, coaching, delegation, face-to-face communication, managing performance, etc are to be actively encouraged, to an extent so that it bring about new ways to manage change applying technique of simultaneous attack.

Sustaining change will only happen if "old" ways of working is replaced by new and right behaviours, which can move the organisation at every level closer to achieving its strategic objectives. Successful leaders keep themselves nouveau in their own field of expertise, becoming aware of changes of present time, in their business and industry and use competencies to current user needs with a broad learning perspective.